

From: Michael Warburton
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To: Guivetchi, Kamyar; Dabbs, Paul; Adams, Linda
Cc: Perrone, Michael; Bottorff, Loren; dhaasz@pacinst.org;
; Beutler, Lisa; ;
; Greg Thomas; Grant Davis;
; Rich Walkling; ;
; Jennifer Martin; Spreck
Rosekrans; Peter Gleick; Scott Cantrell; Michael Warburton; Mary Ann
Dickinson; Jack Sullivan; PollyOsborne-Smith; Bob Wilkinson; Frances Spivy-
Weber; Ann Hayden; Betsy Reifsnider; Soehren, Richard; Lorenzato, Stefan;
Frink, Ted; Andrew, John
Subject: Chapter 1 Water Plan Draft

RE Water Plan Update 2003 - Window Dressing or Broad Support?

With Chapter 1, DWR has an opportunity to demonstrate that it can indeed do things differently than it did in Monterey or Napa: engaging its full constituency and not just its contractors in responding to contemporary water planning challenges. This is important for the future of California. What happened at the last Advisory Committee Meeting, in presenting a draft immediately before the meeting which so substantially changed the tone and measure of the enterprise, and which didn't seem to come from any workshop or dialogue that was open to a range of Advisory Committee Members was an indication that the Department was going back to an old bag of tricks. We may have a Republican Governor, but it will be far more difficult to plan California Water the way Dick Cheney approached energy because we have an educated public that is still smarting from the energy debacle. DWR wrote the checks the California public will be paying for decades.

Some other things are also changing in California. Public Citizen just released a report on the Kern Water Bank and its coverage by the Los Angeles Times is a guarantee that at least a few Californians will be thinking about "paper water" and talking to their friends. Another sea change is reflected in the widespread readership of the Boswell biography and the conversations it is engendering. If the Department isn't willing to anticipate and engage some of the questions the public will be asking, its plans will be increasingly irrelevant and any "consensus" on policy responses will evaporate. Different members of the Advisory Committee have stuck with the process because it has been earning respect over time, and there has even been increasing respect between constituencies and even some reconsideration of hard positions. California is changing and another B-160-98 is the last thing the public needs. It won't even help the people who may be wanting it.

I am pleased to add my voice to the chorus from the environmental caucus supporting the scenario approach to teasing out key questions and robust responses for California's water use challenges. Those would be stronger with narratives that describe conditions better so average Californians could understand what was going on and some of the differences that the technicians are matching numbers to, but even the dislocated general language is better than nothing.

I'm looking forward to more participation and hoping I'll be able to read fast enough to understand what's happening.

All best,

Michael Warburton
Executive Director
The Public Trust Alliance
A Project of the Resource Renewal Institute